

Section 3. Introduction To The Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study Research

Health and Human Services Needs Assessment Study:

The Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study, probes the Island's healthcare and human services needs—studying three specific research questions in depth (see Section 4). This research implements a community-based methodology (sometimes called “participatory action research”), wherein residents, human service advocates, service providers, and local professionals are involved in every step of the work. A coordinated series of studies were conducted across the Island of Nantucket during late Spring 2006.

This research effort has been guided by the Nantucket Council for Human Services consisting of citizen volunteers, members of local charitable organizations, human services advocates and coalition leaders, town government officials, and human service providers. Contacted by research staff from the Family-Centered Institute, Inc., members of literally hundreds of Nantucket households have participated in a survey. Residents, both young and old have enthusiastically volunteered their time, expertise, and personal knowledge to build a considerable body of knowledge about the healthcare and other human services needs of the permanent, year-round resident population of Nantucket. The knowledge gained through the amassing of these 270,000 pieces of data about our community will be used to guide strategies to design, develop, fund, and implement programs and services to alleviate human Needs and suffering here on Nantucket. See also Figure 3.1.

The research sample of the Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment study was designed to include all segments of the population of Nantucket. In addition to the overall population, specific emphasis was placed on sampling Nantucket's under-served and under-represented population groups such as the homeless, and linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and racial minorities. Low-income persons, and the “working poor,” a group traditionally difficult to reach through standard survey techniques, were deliberately over-sampled in order to obtain a fair and comprehensive representation. See also Appendix 1.C.

Community-Based Research: Community-based research places, “the emphasis on the participation and influence of non-academic researchers in the process of creating knowledge.”¹ Barbara Israel and others who have studied the participation of community members in researching unmet public health [and human services] needs and planning responses to meet those needs note that “community participation and influence in research efforts that are beneficial to the communities involved” includes, “the active engagement and influence of community members in all aspects of the research process.” Further they find that the community-based research approach “is particularly aimed toward working with marginalized communities whose members experience limited access to resources and decision-making processes.”

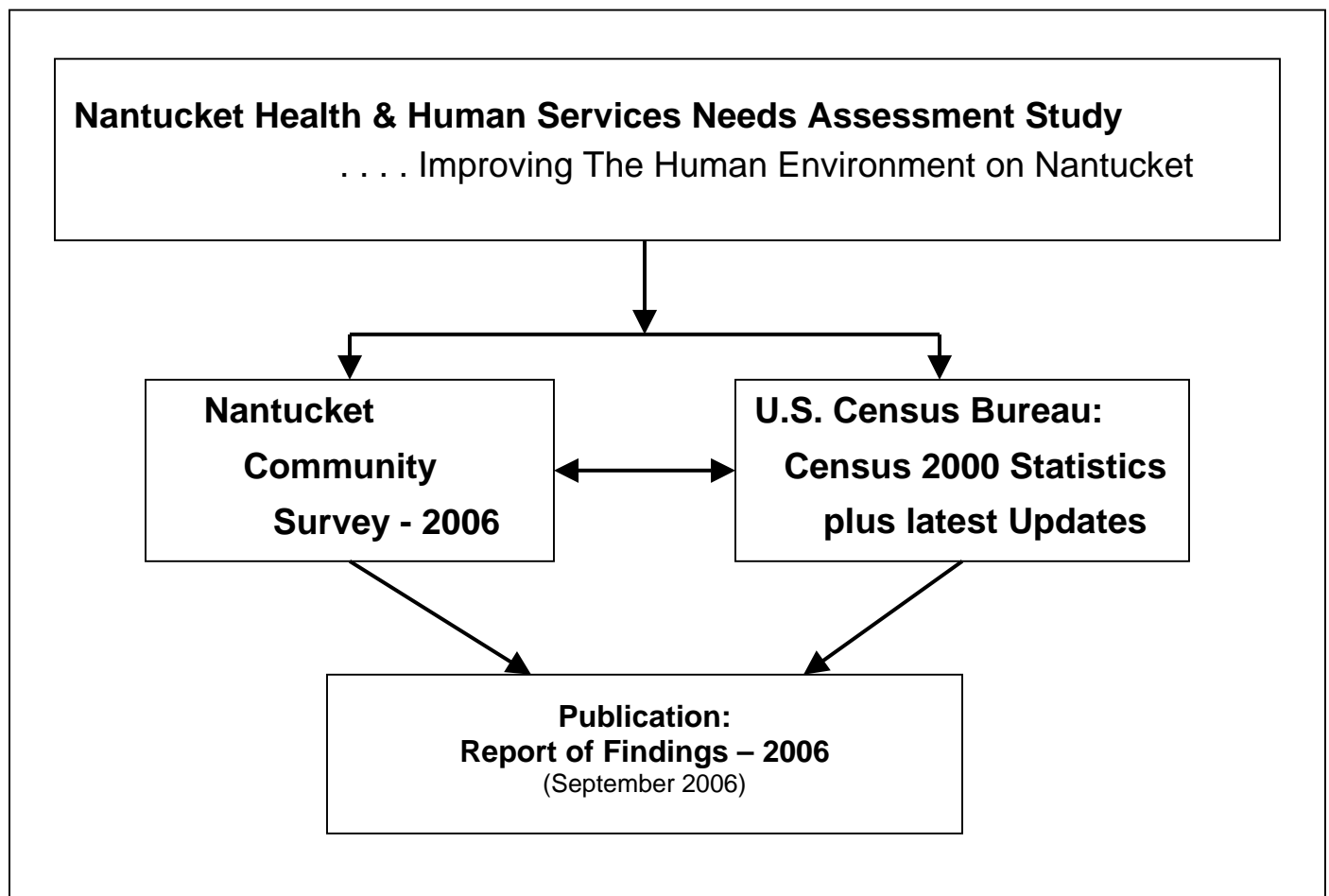
Community Involvement: The community involvement portion of the Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study has consisted of a community development

¹ Israel, B, Schulz, A, Parker, E, Becker, A, (1998). Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health, Annual Review Public Health, 19, 173-202.

professional working with residents from all across Nantucket to accomplish in:

- Identifying resident population groups to be involved in the Study,
- Recruiting key members of these population groups to act as spokespersons and group leaders,
- Training group spokespersons and group leaders,
- Recruiting survey Field Assistants,
- Coordinating survey administration,
- Recruiting Community Forum Assistants, and
- Coordinating Public Presentations of Study Findings.

Figure 3.1 Overview: Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study



Primary Research:

The primary research component of the Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study has consisted of a survey of year-round, permanent residents.

Survey Research:

The Nantucket Community Survey – 2006 was distributed to a random sample of Nantucket households in the late Spring of 2006. Approximately one in every 2 households on Nantucket was randomly invited to participate by filling out a survey questionnaire. The Nantucket Community Survey – 2006 questionnaire was mailed to 1,278 households and administered “on-the-street” to a sample of 645 hard-to-reach households (homeless, “working poor,” racial/cultural/ethnic/linguistic minorities). Just over seven hundred questionnaires were completed and returned. All told, about one in every five households on Nantucket participated. The households surveyed contained more than 1,800 individuals, including nearly 370 young people age 17 or younger. Through the Nantucket Community Survey – 2006, an excellent sample of the Island’s year-round, resident population was “interviewed.” Scores of volunteers helped distribute survey questionnaires in the community, assuring that questionnaires reached even the most “hard-to-reach” individuals in food pantries, on-the-street, and in churches. This ten-page questionnaire (see sample in Appendix 1.A) collected information about the make-up of each household (presence of children, seniors, extended family, income, disabilities, etc.) as well as details of needs for a range of human services in the areas of; housing, transportation, children’s services, public safety, employment, and education. Through this data collection effort, we have been able to build a contemporary view of the needs of our resident population. Appendix 1.B and Appendix 1.C provide detail of Survey Methodology and the Survey Sample, respectively.

Secondary Research:

Secondary Data Collection: Socio-demographic information characterizing the human environment on Nantucket has been collected and is presented in Section 5.1 of this Report. The format of these facts and figures is based upon the newly-introduced U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) research. These statistics serve to update Census 2000 statistics and include the latest Census Bureau estimates.

Research Findings Report:

This comprehensive **Report of Findings - 2006** publication presents significant findings from this current research. Similarly, findings will be presented to the citizenry through a series of public meetings and an Internet web site.

This **Report of Findings – 2006** consists of a topic-by-topic summary narrative divided into five sections, along with an Appendix containing in-depth details of research findings. This Report is fully indexed alphabetically and by topic category and includes a detailed Glossary of Terms.

Research Implementation:

Data Analysis: Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative responses from the Nantucket Community Survey – 2006 has been accomplished by a consultant firm contracted by the Town on behalf of the Nantucket Council For Human Services. Experienced data analysts working in conjunction with qualified Ph.D.-level statistical analysts and survey research experts tabulated these data. Key findings from that analysis are included in this Report of Findings.

Research Timetable: The research and community-based activities of the Nantucket in Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study – 2006 are on going. Research began in February 2006 and will be completed with the publication of this Report of Findings and the public presentation of key findings.

Research Staffing: The research phase of the Nantucket Health & Human Services Needs Assessment Study – 2006 has required the efforts of Town of Nantucket employees, consultants, and scores of community volunteers.

Town of Nantucket Staff: The part-time efforts of the Director of the Nantucket Human Services Department and her Administrative Assistant have been complemented by the work of consultant specialists and community volunteers.

Consultants: In addition to the Nantucket Town employees, consultant specialists supervised by Ph.D.-level professionals have been contracted to accomplish the research work.

Community Volunteers: In addition to the Town of Nantucket employees and consultants, a considerable number of community volunteers have participated during the course of the research phase of the Study. Volunteers have been utilized to fill the following Study positions:

- Council for Human Services Steering Committee Members,
- Field Assistants for survey administration among those population groups that could not easily be reached by the mail survey.